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US Support For Israel Comes At A Staggering, Multifaceted Price

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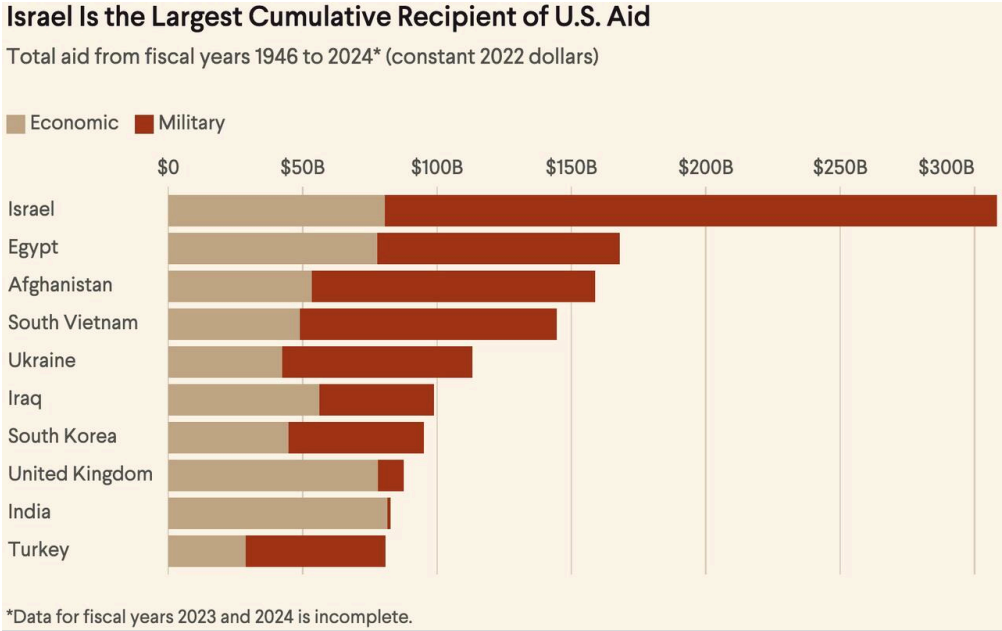
Via Brian McGlinchey via Stark Realities

When asked about the cost of their government's support of the State of Israel, some Americans will say it's $3.8 billion a year — the amount of annual military aid the United States is committed to under its current, 10-year "memorandum of understanding" with Israel. However, **that answer massively understates the true cost** of the relationship, not only because it doesn't capture various, vast expenditures springing from it, but even more so because the relationship's steepest costs can't be measured in dollars.

Since its 1948 founding, **Israel has been far and away the largest recipient of American foreign assistance**. Though the Ukraine war created a brief anomaly, Israel generally tops the list every year, despite the fact that Israel is among the world's richest countries — ranked three spots below the UK and two spots above Japan in per capita GDP. Driving that point home, even when using the grossly-understating $3.8 billion figure for US expenditures on Israel, America gave the Zionist state $404 per person in the 2023 fiscal year, compared to just $15 per person for Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries on Earth and America's third-largest beneficiary that year.



Source: Council on Foreign Relations

Israel's cumulative post-World War II haul has been nearly double that of runner-up Egypt. **What most Americans don't realize, however, is that much of Egypt's take — $1.4 billion in 2023 — should be chalked up to Israel too**, because of ongoing US aid commitments rising from the 1978 Camp David Accords that brokered peace between Egypt and Israel. The same can be said for Jordan — America's fourth-largest beneficiary in fiscal 2023 at $1.7 billion. US aid to the kingdom surged after it signed its own 1994 treaty with Israel, and a wedge of Jordan's aid is intended to address the country's large refugee population, comprising not only Palestinians displaced by Israel's creation, but also masses who've fled US-led regime-change wars pursued on Israel's behalf.

Then there's the supplemental aid to Israel that Congress periodically authorizes on top of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) commitment. Since the October 7 Hamas invasion of Israel, these supplements have exceeded the MOU commitment by leaps and bounds. In just the first year of the war in Gaza, Congress and President Biden approved an additional $14.1 billion in "emergency" military aid to Israel, bringing the total for that year to $17.9 billion.

One must also consider the fact that, given the US government runs perpetual deficits that now easily exceed $1 trillion, **every marginal expenditure, including aid to Israel, is financed with debt that bears an interest expense**, increasing Americans' tax-and-inflation burden.

On top of money given to Israel, the **US government spends huge sums on activities either meant to benefit Israel or that spring from Israel's actions**. For example, during just the first year of Israel's post-Oct 7 war in Gaza, increased US Navy offensive and defensive operations in the Middle East theater cost America an estimated $4.86 billion.

Those Gaza-war-related outflows have not only continued but accelerated. For example, earlier this year, the Pentagon engaged in an intense campaign against Yemen's Houthis. In proclaimed retaliation for Israel's systematic destruction of Gaza, the Houthis have targeted Israel, and ships the Houthis said were linked to Israel. In response, America unleashed "Operation Rough Rider," which often saw $2 million American missiles being used against $10,000 Houthi drones, and cost between one and two billion dollars.

President Trump's military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities — amid a war initiated by Israel on contrived premises — cost America another one to two billion dollars, according to early estimates. Even before the attack on a nuclear program the US intelligence community continues to assess is not aimed at producing a weapon, the Pentagon was already spending more money on Israel's behalf, helping to defend the country from Iran's response to Israel's unprovoked aggression. The run-up to US strikes itself entailed a massive and costly mobilization of American forces and equipment to the region, as the Pentagon readied for multiple scenarios.

Propelled by Israel's powerful US-based lobby, by Israel-pandering legislators, and by a revolving cast of Israel-favoring presidents, cabinet members, and national security officials, **the United States has consistently pursued policies in the Middle East that place top priority on securing Israel's regional supremacy**.

Among the many avenues used to pursue that goal, none has been more costly than that of regime change, where an outcome that results in a shattered, chaotic state is seemingly just as pleasing to Israel and its American collaborators as one that spawns a functioning state with ✖ Israel-accommodating government — and where the cost is often measured not only in US dollars but in American lives and limbs.

A Marine weeps at a 2005 memorial service in Iraq honoring 31 comrades killed in a single day (Anja Nedringhaus/AP)

Of course, the most infamous such regime-change effort was the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. **"If you take out Saddam, I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region,"** current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assured a US congressional hearing. Doing his part to aid a Bush administration dominated by Israel-aligned neoconservatives bent on taking out one of Israel's regional adversaries, Netanyahu also said there was "no question whatsoever" that Hussein was "hell-bent on achieving atomic bombs."

The drive to topple Syria's Iran-allied Assad government is another prominent example of regime change on behalf of Israel, as the two countries sought to sever the "Shia Crescent" that — due in great part to Saddam's ouster — presented a continuous pipeline of Iranian influence extending to Israel's borders. To the contentment of the US and Israeli governments, Syria is now led by an al Qaeda alumnus who's reportedly poised to relinquish Syria's long-standing claim on the Golan Heights, which Israel captured in 1967.

Taken together, **the price tag of US military operations in Iraq and Syria, including past and future medical and disability care for veterans, totals $2.9 trillion,** according to Brown University's Costs of War Project. The human toll has been even more mind-boggling: upwards of 580,000 civilians and combatants killed, with perhaps two to four times that number indirectly perishing from displacement, disease and other factors. More than 4,600 US service-members died in Iraq, and 32,000 were injured, many of them enduring amputations and burns. Alongside mass suffering, these and other US interventions undertaken to ensure Israel's regional supremacy have fomented enormous resentment of the United States across the region.

Infantryman Brendan Marrocco lost all four limbs in a 2009 roadside bomb explosion in Iraq (Ruth Fremson for the *New York Times* via *NBC News*)

Those resentments help drive another massive debit in the Israel's account with the United States: Any thorough assessment of the costs of the relationship must reflect the fact that **US backing of Israel is a principal motivator of Islamist terrorism directed against Americans**, and there's no greater example of that fact than 9/11.

From Osama bin Laden to the hijackers, anger over US support of Israel was one of Al Qaeda's foremost motivators:

- In his 1996 declaration of war against the United States, bin Laden cited the First Qana Massacre, in which Israel killed 106 Lebanese civilians who sought refuge at a UN compound. He said Muslim youth "hold [the United States] responsible for all the killings…carried out by your Zionist brothers in Lebanon; you openly supplied them with arms and finance."
- **Bin Laden said he was initially inspired to strike American skyscrapers when he witnessed Israel's 1982 destruction of apartment towers in Lebanon.** ✖
- The 9/11 Commission said mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's "animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experiences there as a student, but rather from his violent

disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel."

- 9/11 hijacking ringleader Mohammed Atta signed his will on the day Israel began its 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath attack on Lebanon. A friend said Atta was furious and used his will as a means of committing his life to the cause.
- **An acquaintance of hijacker-pilot Marwan al-Shehhi asked why neither he nor Atta ever laughed. He replied, "How can you laugh when people are dying in Palestine?"**
- Addressing the motives of the 9/11 hijackers, FBI Special Agent James Fitzgerald told the 9/11 Commission, "I believe they feel a sense of outrage against the United States. They identify with the Palestinian problem…and I believe they tend to focus their anger on the United States."

The 9/11 attacks killed 2,977 people, resulted in roughly $50 billion in insured losses, and opened America's Global War on Terror. In addition to its use as a false pretext for invading Iraq on Israel's behalf, **9/11 prompted the US invasion of Afghanistan** and the ensuing 20-year Fool's Errand that took the lives of 2,459 US service-members (among 176,000 people in all), and cost $2.3 trillion.

With dread, **we must now wonder what price may be extracted by terrorists motivated by US support of Israel's ongoing, bloody rampage in Gaza**, which has killed more than 56,000 people — more than half of them women and children — and deliberately rendered much of the territory uninhabitable.

The death and destruction is being meted out with American-supplied weapons, from F-15s, F-16s, and F-35 fighters to Apache attack helicopters, precision-guided munitions, artillery shells and rifles. No weapon has figured more heavily in the shocking civilian death toll and catastrophic physical destruction than US-supplied 2,000-pound MK-84 bombs, which have a lethal radius up to 1,198 feet. Even after outside observers were taken aback by Israel's use of the bombs in densely-populated areas, the US government continued to ship more of them to Israel.

Israel has engaged in mass destruction of civilian infrastructure, rending much of Gaza uninhabitable (Ashraf Amra -UNRWA)

As if the death and destruction weren't enough to incite deadly retaliation against Israel's sponsor, **depraved Israeli soldiers have used social media to document themselves gleefully demolishing entire residential blocks**, smashing shops, toys and personal possessions, and — in a disturbingly widespread trend — dressing in the lingerie of displaced Palestinian women. All along, Israeli politicians, pundits and citizens openly endorse ethnic cleansing, forced starvation and other war crimes. Last week, multiple Israeli soldiers confirmed that, under orders, troops have been routinely using lethal weapons — including *artillery shells* — as a barbaric form of crowd control at food distribution points.

If innocent Americans are someday victimized by terrorists seeking to avenge the horror visited upon Gaza's two million men, women and children with US-supplied weapons, **watch for a perverse dynamic in which the attack is cited as a reason to redouble American support of Israel**. Given the effectiveness of that spin, terrorism against the United States is a boon to the State of Israel. Reflecting that dark dynamic in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Netanyahu seemingly struggled to contain his enthusiasm as he spoke to the *New York Times*:

> *Asked tonight what the attack meant for relations between the United States and Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister, replied, **"It's very good."** Then he edited himself: "Well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy."*

This self-perpetuating phenomenon — in which terrorism motivated by American support for Israel is used to promote American support for Israel — isn't the only example of warped thinking about the relationship. **America's approach to the Middle East is awash in circular, Israel-centered logic**. For example, Americans are told Israel is a critical ally because it serves as a "bulwark" against Iran — and that America needs a bulwark against Iran because it's an adversary of Israel.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Iranians held a mass candlelight vigil in Tehran's Mohseni Square to express their condolences to the American people

In one of several observations about Israel that led to him being relieved of his position leading the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Levant and Egypt branch in June, Army Colonel Nathan McCormack summed up the relationship this way:

> ***"[Israel is] our worst 'ally.' We get literally nothing out of the 'partnership' other than the enmity of millions of people in the Middle East, Africa and Asia."***

Bit by bit, that realization is spreading throughout American society, as citizens observe Israel's conduct in Gaza, scrutinize the Israel-Palestine conflict as never before, and grow increasingly wary of Israel's attempts to drag the United States into another major war launched on false pretenses. That latter dimension has special resonance with countless **US combat veterans who've come to the terrible realization that their sacrifices and those of their fallen comrades were ultimately made for the benefit of a foreign government** — and to the detriment of America's security.

Earlier this year, Pew Research found a majority of Americans now have a negative view of the State of Israel, with the most jarring shifts observed within Israel's strongest bastion of support: the Republican Party. Guaranteeing that Israel's standing is poised for more deterioration, **bad feelings about Israel among Republicans under age 50 soared 15 points** in just three years, with half of them now having an unfavorable view of the country.

In 2010, Meir Dagan, who headed Israel's Mossad spy agency, warned a Knesset hearing that "Israel is gradually turning from an asset to the United States to a burden." Fifteen years later, **Israel's status as an**

enormous, multidimensional burden on the American people is more evident than ever.

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—James Bovard, Columnist, USA Today

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